

A Guide to HIV Counseling and Testing

**Take control of your health. Know your status.
Get tested.**

What is the HIV test?

The HIV test can be either a blood test or an oral test (which tests the cells from the lining of your mouth). It looks for HIV antibodies, which your body produces to help fight HIV. The test is easy and confidential.

What does the HIV test tell you?

The HIV test will tell you if you are HIV negative or HIV positive.

HIV negative = No HIV antibodies are found at test time.

HIV positive = HIV antibodies are found.

A person has HIV. It can take up to 6 weeks for your body to produce enough antibodies to be detected by the test. **So, a test today will tell you what your HIV status was 6 weeks ago.** The test does not protect you from getting HIV in the future.

If the test is positive, a second test may be needed to confirm the results.

All HIV testing in Massachusetts is voluntary.

An HIV test can only be given with your written consent.

What can I expect when I get tested?

Getting tested for HIV can be scary, but you don't need to go through it alone. An HIV test counselor will be there to support you through the process.

Your test counselor will:

- **Explain** the testing process, what your testing options are, and what the test result means.
- **Talk** with you about your risk factors for HIV, other STDs, and hepatitis.
- **Help** you decide if you should get tested.
- **Take** a sample (blood or oral).
- **Set up** a time to go over your test result.

- **Give** your test result and discuss what the test result means.
- **Discuss** ways to protect yourself and your partners.
- **Refer** you to other services like substance abuse treatment, needle exchange, and mental health programs, if needed.

To find an HIV testing site near you, call 1-800-235-2331.

If you are HIV negative...

- There are ways to stay negative. Your test counselor will talk with you about lowering your risk for getting HIV, other STDs, and hepatitis through sex or drug use.
- Ongoing risk behaviors will increase the chance of getting HIV.

If you are HIV positive...

- There are health care options and treatments available to help you stay healthy and live longer. Your test counselor will help you find free or low-cost care.
- Your test counselor will talk with you about ways to stay healthy and lower your risk for passing HIV to your partners.

There are health care providers and organizations that offer support services, including:

- Transportation and child care for doctors visits
- Food assistance
- Help in telling partners and family

Who will know my test result? Your test result will only be given to you.

Under Massachusetts' law, your test counselor **cannot** give your result to anyone without your written consent.

If you have...

- **had vaginal or anal sex without a condom**
 - **been stuck with a needle**
 - **shared needles or works (including cotton, cooker, or water)**
- ... you may be at risk for HIV, other STDs, or hepatitis.

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus

causes

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HIV is found in the blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk of someone infected with HIV.

Why should I get tested for HIV?

- Once you know your status, you can take control of your health. There are health care options, treatments, and ways to stay healthy both with and without HIV.
- If you are HIV positive, you can prevent passing it on to others.
- If you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, there are treatments available to help prevent your baby from getting HIV.

What about testing for other STDs and hepatitis?

Many of the same behaviors that put people at risk for HIV also put people at risk for other STDs and hepatitis.

Talk to your test counselor about options for STD and hepatitis screening and vaccination.

For more information about HIV, other STDs, or hepatitis call the

**AIDS Action Committee Hotline
at 1-800-235-2331 (English, Spanish)
TTY: 617- 437-1672**

Where can I get tested?

To find out where you can get an HIV test near you, call **1-800-235-2331**
TTY: 617- 437-1672.

Get Tested. Get Care. Get Support.

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